

Educational Equity: Latino and English Learner Success in Arizona

UnidosUS believes in a quality public education for all students with strong accountability measures to close achievement gaps that persist for Latino* students and English Learners (ELs).

Arizona has an opportunity to ensure the state's future economic success by advancing policies and practices that support the educational achievement of Latino students who represent a large share of the K-12 population and ELs as they chart their path through the education system.

- **Latino students make up over half a million, or 46%, of Arizona's K-12 students.**[†]
- There are nearly **75,000 ELs in Arizona, enough to fill up the Superdome.**[‡]
- **85% of Arizona ELs are Latino.**[§]
- **98% of Arizona children birth-to-age-17 are U.S. citizens.**[¶]

Largest Number of Latino Students in Arizona Counties SY 2018-19

County	Hispanic/Latino	Latino Share of Students in County (%)
Maricopa	338,735	44.6
Pima	81,066	54.3
Yuma	32,811	83.9
Pinal	23,364	44.8
Cochise	10,698	55.7

Source: Arizona Department of Education, "Enrollment: 2018-2019 School Year," <https://www.azed.gov/accountability-research/data/> (accessed November 15, 2019).

* The terms "Hispanic" and "Latino" are used interchangeably by the U.S. Census Bureau and throughout this document to refer to persons of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central and South American, Dominican, Spanish, and other Hispanic descent; they may be of any race. This document may also refer to this population as "Latinx" to represent the diversity of gender identities and expressions that are present in the community.

† Arizona Department of Education, "Enrollment: 2018-2019 School Year," <https://www.azed.gov/accountability-research/data/> (accessed November 15, 2019).

‡ Id.

§ Id.

¶ UnidosUS calculation using U.S. Census Bureau, "2017 Community Survey 1-Year Estimates," *American Community Survey*. Washington, DC, 2017, <https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?src=bkmk> (accessed November 15, 2019), Table B050031.

Arizona is at a critical point in righting the course for education equity and fostering a new age of academic success. Following the passage of Proposition 203 in 2000, Arizona repealed its bilingual education laws and required that all classes be taught in English, limiting the type of instruction available to English Learners. Since the adoption of restrictive English for Children policies over the last 18 years, student access to high-quality coursework and valuable peer-to-peer exposure between ELs and their native-English speaking peers has been limited, resulting in little to no academic progress for tens of thousands of students.* By 2013, fewer than 8% of the state's ELs had met basic level attainment in fourth grade reading.† Data show that the intended goals of Prop. 203 to help children acquire “a good knowledge of English” and allow them to “fully participate in the American dream” has not been achieved. During the 2015-16 school year, Arizona was one of six states in which fewer than half of ELs graduated from high school on time. Across the entire nation, Arizona was the state with the largest opportunity gap in graduation rates, with the EL graduation rate 48 percentage points lower than the graduation rate for non-ELs.‡

The most recent National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) report shows that between 2003 to 2019, the fourth grade reading basic level attainment for ELs in Arizona has decreased by 3 percentage points and stands at 15% in 2019. In the same year, only 48% of Latino non-EL students scored at basic level or above in fourth grade reading.§

In order to raise the academic performance of Arizona's Latinx and EL students and strengthen the state's economic outlook, UnidosUS supports the repeal of Proposition 203 and the adoption of evidence-based dual language instruction.

About Us

UnidosUS, previously known as NCLR (National Council of La Raza), is the nation's largest Hispanic civil rights and advocacy organization. Through its unique combination of expert research, advocacy, programs, and an [Affiliate Network](#) of nearly 300 community-based organizations across the United States and Puerto Rico, UnidosUS simultaneously challenges the social, economic, and political barriers that affect Latinos at the national and local levels.

For more than 50 years, UnidosUS has united communities and different groups seeking common ground through collaboration, and that share a desire to make our country stronger. For more information on UnidosUS, visit www.unidosus.org or follow us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), and [Twitter](#).

* Mitchell, Corey, “English Only Laws in Education on Verger of Extinction,” *EducationWeek*, October 23, 2019, <https://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2019/10/23/english-only-laws-in-education-on-verge-of.html?cmp=eml-enl-eu-news1&M=58963943&U=2142787&UID=Ofb48a8de9838c147cc7a38eff0034f0> (accessed November 25, 2019).

† U.S. Department of Education, “NAEP Data Explorer,” <https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/ndecore/sharere-direct?su=nde&sb=RED&gr=4&fr=2&yr=2019R3-2017R3-2015R3-2013R3-2011R3-2009R3-2007R3-2005R3-2003R3&sc=RRPCM&ju=AZ&vr=SDRACE-false--LEP-false&ct=SDRACE-LEP&st=ALC-BB-AB-AP-AD&sht=REPORT&urls=xplore&mi=false&svt=true&nd=0&vl=SHORT&vo=DESC&inc=NONE&up=true&rrl=SAMPLE%7CSAMPLE%7C1--JURISDICTION%7CJURISDICTION%7C2--SDRACE%7CVARIABLE%7C3&rti=LEP%7CVARIABLE%7C1&sm=false> (accessed August 2019), Reading, Grade 4, 2003,2005, 2007, 2009, 2011, 2013, 2015, 2017, 2019. Status as English Language Learner, Achievement levels - cumulative.

‡ Academic Performance and Outcomes for English Learners. U.S. Department of Education. Washington, DC, 2018, <https://www2.ed.gov/datastory/el-outcomes/index.html> (accessed August 2019).

§ U.S. Department of Education, “NAEP Data Explorer,” <https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/ndecore/sharere-direct?su=nde&sb=RED&gr=4&fr=2&yr=2019R3-2017R3-2015R3-2013R3-2011R3-2009R3-2007R3-2005R3-2003R3&sc=RRPCM&ju=AZ&vr=SDRACE-false--LEP-false&ct=SDRACE-LEP&st=ALC-BB-AB-AP-AD&sht=REPORT&urls=xplore&mi=false&svt=true&nd=0&vl=SHORT&vo=DESC&inc=NONE&up=true&rrl=SAMPLE%7CSAMPLE%7C1--JURISDICTION%7CJURISDICTION%7C2--SDRACE%7CVARIABLE%7C3&rti=LEP%7CVARIABLE%7C1&sm=false> (accessed August 2019), Reading, Grade 4, 2003,2005, 2007, 2009, 2011, 2013, 2015, 2017, 2019. Status as English Language Learner, Achievement levels - cumulative.